
FOOD SAFETY
SAFEGUARDING THE FOOD WE EAT,
FROM FARM TO TABLE

Dear Californian,

Consumers should not have to worry about whether the food we bring home from the grocery store is safe to eat. That's why ensuring that our food is held to the highest possible standards—from the farm to the table—is a top priority.

Feeding antibiotics to animals to enhance their growth and prevent disease has been a longstanding practice in American agriculture. Over time, the effectiveness of the antibiotics is reduced.

This is a huge public health concern—antibiotics are one of modern medicine's greatest achievements.

That's why I've introduced legislation in Congress and worked with the Food and Drug Administration to reduce the amount and types of antibiotics used in agriculture. It is of the utmost importance that we consider the long-term consequences of this dangerous practice over any short-term gain.

I'm also working to ensure that the number of Americans who get sick from dangerous pathogens in their food is reduced. The Department of Agriculture's standards for *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* were too lax for too long. In 2016, I was able to convince the USDA to finally enact stricter limits on these two dangerous bacteria in poultry products.

Congress must also fully fund the *Food Safety Modernization Act*, which will strengthen the safeguards for imported food, produce, seafood and animal feed. The inspectors who make sure our food supply is safe cannot do their jobs if they don't have adequate resources.

I remain committed to working on solutions that ensure that consuming food that we purchase from our local supermarkets does not put us at risk of sickness.

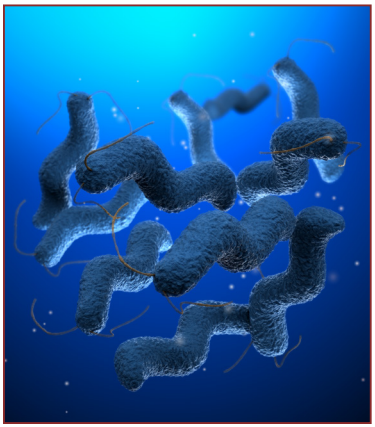
Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Campylobacter/Salmonella

Foodborne illness is a major problem in the United States and effects more people than you might think.

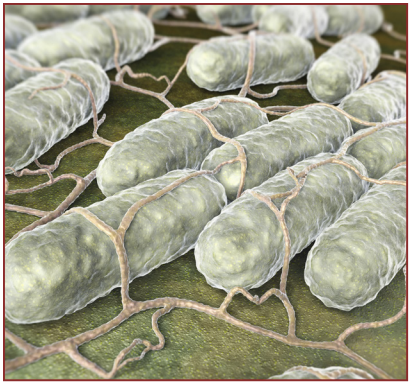
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates 1 in 6 Americans contracts a foodborne illness each year. 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die.



What is *Campylobacter?*

Campylobacteriosis is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter*. The illness typically lasts one week, although in some cases can last much longer. Most cases are associated with undercooked meat or unpasteurized milk, however *Campylobacter* illnesses are becoming more and more common.

- *Campylobacter* illnesses have increased by 13 percent over the baseline number of annual illnesses that occurred from 2006 to 2008.



What is *Salmonella?*

Salmonella causes the infectious disease Salmonellosis. The duration of this illness is usually between four to seven days. While symptoms usually dissipate on their own, in some cases the bacteria spreads to the bloodstream. These cases require prompt treatment.

- Data show the number of *Salmonella* illnesses in the United States is not declining.

Advancements in medical technology and increased public health awareness are reducing the occurrence of disease and it is concerning that we cannot make the same reducing common foodborne illnesses.

Recent *Campylobacter* Outbreaks

October 2014

- *Campylobacter* in unpasteurized milk at a potluck sickens 22 Wisconsin high school students.

October 2014

- 80 cases of *Campylobacter* result from the consumption of raw milk from a farm in Utah.

February 2012

- 76 people are sickened by *Campylobacter* traced back to raw milk from a dairy in Pennsylvania.

October 2008

- 99 are sickened with *Campylobacter* resulting from a consumption of raw peas grown in Alaska.

Recent *Salmonella* Outbreaks

August 2017

- A Salmonella outbreak sickens 235 people across 26 states and is traced back to imported papayas.

February 2016

- 907 cases of Salmonella in 40 states linked to cucumbers imported from Mexico and distributed across the U.S.

July 2010

- Approximately 1,939 reported illnesses nationwide from *Salmonella* outbreak traced back to an egg supplier in Galt, Iowa.

May 2008

- Jalapeño peppers grown and Mexico and distributed from the United States are to blame for a *Salmonella* outbreak that causes 1,442 cases of illness.

Updating USDA Pathogen Standards

I joined with Senator Gillibrand and Senator Durbin to urge USDA to update its outdated standards for safe consumption of food. A big reason the United States has such high levels of foodborne illness is outdated—and in some cases nonexistent—pathogen standards.

- CDC found in 2013 that more than 40 percent of ground chicken tested positive for *Salmonella*.
- In 2012, CDC found that 26 percent of poultry parts tested positive for *Salmonella* and 21 percent tested positive for *Campylobacter*.

What are pathogen standards?

In the context of food production, pathogen standards are a benchmark used to measure healthy and acceptable levels of bacteria in the food we buy. **In February 2016, the USDA announced stricter limits on *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in poultry products.** Under the new standards, the amount of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* allowed in poultry has been reduced significantly from previous levels.

New ***Salmonella*** standards:

- **15.4 percent** for chicken parts. There were previously **no pathogen standards** for poultry parts.
- **25 percent** for ground chicken, down from 44.6 percent.
- **13.5 percent** for ground turkey, down from 49.9 percent.

New ***Campylobacter*** standards:

- **7.7 percent** for chicken parts.
- **7.7 percent** for ground chicken.
- **1.9 percent** for ground turkey.

Note that there were previously no federal pathogen standards for *Campylobacter* in poultry parts, ground chicken or ground turkey.

Food Safety Modernization Act

The *Food Safety Modernization Act* (FSMA) provided the most sweeping and influential changes to food safety laws in 70 years. President Obama signed the bill into law on January 4, 2011.

Although the law spans many facets of food safety, the underlying changes shift the focuses from **RESPONDING** to contamination to **PREVENTING** it.

- **For example**: FDA estimates it inspects less than 2 percent of imports. FSMA will dramatically increase inspections of imported food and increase its verification activities globally.

Lax implementation and underfunding of FSMA could lead to avoidable contamination. **I fought to ensure that 2016 Senate funding legislation included over $100 million for food safety inspections and strict import standards.**

Antibiotics in Agriculture

For decades, animal and poultry producers have fed antibiotics to livestock in order to prevent infection and induce growth.

Why is the use of antibiotics a concern?

- The effectiveness of medically-important antibiotics is jeopardized if the practice is abused and drug-resistant bacteria develops in meat products.
- The FDA estimates that **nearly 100 different antibiotics** can legally be fed to animals continuously, without any maximum duration. This is not the way antibiotics are meant to be administered. Antibiotics should only be given to animals when they are sick and for a specific period of time.

What is being done to address this problem?

Several positive steps are being taken—by industry and government alike—to reduce the overuse of antibiotics.

- The FDA has implemented a new rule requiring licensed veterinarians to prescribe antibiotics used in animal feed. The rule also prohibits the use of antibiotics solely for the purpose of making animals gain weight.
- A few large companies in the food industry, such as McDonalds, are committing to sell only poultry or animal products raised without medically-important antibiotics.

The FDA now requires the reporting of all sales of antimicrobials (antibiotics) used for food-producing animals, including estimates based on the amount used in each major food-producing species. As a result, the data collected will be key in identifying patterns of use and further help efforts to use antibiotics responsibly.

While these changes are a trend in the right direction, more action is needed.

Prevention of Antibiotic Resistance Act

- Senator Feinstein introduced the Prevention of Antibiotic Resistance Act along with Senators Susan Collins (R-Maine), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) and Cory Booker (D-N.J.).

What would the *Prevention of Antibiotic Resistance Act* do?

- This legislation would require that the FDA withdraw its approval of medically-important antibiotics used for disease prevention and control unless a producer can show its use does not pose a risk to human health.
- Antibiotics that meet these standards would be issued a revised label with proper dosage

"Antibiotic resistance is one of the biggest public health threats we face and we need a comprehensive response to preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics. Our bill would ensure that antibiotics approved to treat disease are not used inappropriately.."

– Senator Dianne Feinstein

For More Information

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- Food Safety and Inspection Service
  http://www.fsis.usda.gov/
- USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline
  1-888-674-6854

California Department of Public Health

- Food Safety Program
  http://www.cdph.ca.gov/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- CDC and Food Safety
  http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety
  1-800-CDC-INFO
- Foodborne Outbreak Online Database
  http://wwwn.cdc.gov/foodborneoutbreaks/

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

- Food Safety Modernization Act
  http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Senate Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

http://feinstein.senate.gov

December 2017 **264942**